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THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF COLORADO COLLEGE

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"I should as soon think of spending my life in setting up an empty dry-goods box on these vast plains as to erect a college emptied of Christianity." These words from the inaugural of President Tenney of Colorado College¹ express the spirit of the founders of the institution. Organized under a resolution of the General Conference of the Congregational churches of Colorado, adopted January 21, 1874, it was designed from the beginning to be "forever Christian but without ecclesiastical control."² As General Palmer, the most generous and loyal friend of the college, who laid out the city of Colorado Springs and set aside in its original plat a large tract of land to be used for college purposes, said in breaking ground for the first college building:³ "Let us forever devote it and the structure which is to rise upon it to the purpose of education in the most unsectarian way, to the discovery and inculcation of truth." The charter of the college requires that the corporation shall never be under the control of any sect, and that no officer, teacher, or student shall be required to submit to any denominational or theological test to enter or remain in the institution. But it declares explicitly that the institution is to be maintained "under Christian auspices." The purpose of the founders was thus to erect on a spot which was then one of the outposts of American civilization a college which should be untrammelled by the tenets of any sect, but should teach young men and women to think and live in the spirit of Christ.

The enterprise was in its inception missionary, and most of the early donors gave to the college from the same motives that prompted them to give to missions. The early appeals for the

¹ Dr. Tenney was president from 1876 until 1885.

² Haskell, *Collegiate Education in Colorado*, p. 14. This pamphlet is the report of the Committee of the General Congregational Conference of Colorado, on the basis of which Colorado College was organized in January, 1874.

³ July 4, 1877.

support of the institution were concentrated upon the hope and the conviction that it was destined to be of effective service in meeting the needs, intellectual and spiritual, of the Spanish-speaking peoples and in helping to solve the problem of Mormonism, in the western states and territories. Joseph Cook remarked upon these phases of the opportunity of the college in a prelude to one of his Monday lectures:⁴ "There is a Colorado College now in process of construction. It hopes to stand as a lighthouse for the range of the Rocky Mountains and the great valley between the Sierras and Colorado. . . . How sublime is the duty of lighting college beacons to blaze afar from the Rocky Mountains and the Mexican heights. 'We have,' says President Tenney, 'mediaeval Spanish Catholicism voting in Colorado. If the Spirit of the Lord descends with tongues of fire on a Christian college in the New West, it is likely that one of the tongues will be Spanish.'"

The spirit of its founders and early leaders was a guaranty of the religious and missionary attitude of the early college. Its unsectarian ideal was evidently also realized: "Out of the whole number of students in attendance during the last three years [1876-79] one-fifth have been Methodist, nearly one-fifth Episcopalian, nearly one-fifth Congregational, at least one-eighth Presbyterian and Cumberland Presbyterian, and the remainder have belonged to some other denomination or have had no denominational connection." At that time, probably four-fifths of the student body had church homes other than that to which the majority of the trustees belonged.⁵

Thus in its foundation and in its early spirit Colorado College greatly resembled the typical New England college which its founders sought to imitate. Through the thirty-seven years during which it has been in existence, it has sought to hold this ideal constantly before its students, and in spite of the great changes through which the institution has passed, it continues true to its founders and their purpose.

⁴ February 18, 1878.

⁵ From an article in the *Mountaineer*, Colorado Springs, November 2, 1879, by Professor W. D. Sheldon, then of Colorado College, now vice-president of Girard College.

The student body of today numbers 501, exclusive of 57 enrolled in music courses and 22 who, early in the year, took the short course for forest rangers. These students are distributed as follows:

	Men	Women
Arts.....	158	238
Engineering.....	67	...
Forestry.....	38	...
Total.....	263	238

A study of the birthplaces and present place of residence of these young people is suggestive. Of the number, 192 were born in Colorado and 362 west of the Mississippi River in 20 different states; 12 were born in New England, 10 in New York, 5 in New Jersey, 12 in Pennsylvania, and 16 in Ohio; 25 were born in the South, and 8 on the Pacific coast. The birthplaces of all the students include 40 states and the District of Columbia. Fifteen were born in foreign countries—Canada, England, Ireland, Germany, France, Switzerland, Poland, and Japan.

The *homes* of 454 students are west of the Mississippi, 390 residing in Colorado. New York has sent 8, New England 6, Pennsylvania 3, New Jersey 2, Illinois 13, the Pacific coast 6, and five southern states 7. Twenty-seven states and two foreign countries, Canada and Japan, are represented.

It will be seen that the influences which have helped shape the young people have been very diverse. In such an institution the intellectual and religious type cannot be as definite as it is in one which draws largely from one locality, and that a long-settled one.

The religious distribution of the students shows that the ideals of the founders are not forgotten today. During the last two years the church members have been in the following proportions:

	1910-11	1911-12
Percentage of students members of churches.....	72	73
Percentage of men among church members.....	45	47
Percentage of women among church members...	55	53

The percentage of church membership has, during the last two years, been distributed among the denominations as follows:

	Pres- byteri- an	Me h- odist	Con- grega- tional	Epis- copa- lian	Bap- tist	Chris- tian	Roman Catho- lic	Lu- theran	Jewish	Chris- tian Science
1910-11.....	33	19	14	10	9	7	4	1	1	1
1911-12.....	32	19	14	11	11	4	4	2	1	3

In 1904 and 1905 the Congregational students numbered 24 per cent and 30 per cent respectively, but since that time have never reached more than 21 per cent, while the Presbyterians have twice during the same period numbered 35 per cent. Eight and seven years ago the Baptists formed 22 per cent and 16 per cent of the student body, but their present proportion is that which they have maintained for several years. The other denominations have kept about the average indicated for a considerable period, except the Jewish, Lutheran, and Christian Science, each of which has slightly increased.

As is well known, the West is more conservative theologically than the East; hence the home and church influences about the young people have been on the whole conservative. But the students have proved themselves thoughtful and open to broadening influences. There has not been in the student body the widespread intellectual struggle with religious problems which has characterized the life of so many eastern institutions, but the progress to the newer in thought has been slower, a gradual broadening rather than a sudden upheaval. There has been very little loss of faith. The attempt has been made on the part of the college to do constructive work in the field of philosophical and biblical study, and for almost all students the gulf into which elsewhere so many plunge has been successfully bridged.

The moral standards of the college have always been high. This fact has been frequently commented upon by members of the faculty coming from other institutions and by students acquainted elsewhere. There are fewer temptations of the grosser sort in Colorado Springs, where there are no open saloons, and where the religious influences are stronger than in many college towns. More-

over, the student body has fewer financial resources than in many institutions. The majority of the men of the college are earning their way wholly or in part. Colorado College has happily not yet reached the stage when students come to it from families of large means, simply for "a social experience."

The faculty of the college have always been a potent influence in its religious life. In its early years there was hardly a man or a woman who came to teach in it who did not have the same motive impelling him which prompted its founders to sacrifice for it. The story of the heroism of the members of the faculty in those early days will probably never be written, but there are some who know and honor the men and the women who willingly and uncomplainingly went without the things they needed for the gratification of their personal tastes, and even for their physical comfort, that the college might be saved and live on to fulfil its great mission. And as the time of the idle rich student has fortunately not yet arrived in Colorado College, so neither has the time yet come of that type of teacher who considers his classroom work a necessary evil and hurries through it with scant attention that he may return to the pursuit of his personal ends of scholarship or research. The institution believes in the *college* ideal, that the supreme aim of the college is to mold men, and that the teacher who is false to this aim is not worthy of a place within it.

Some of the curriculum work of Colorado College has had a close relation to the religious life of the students, notably the work in philosophy. A greater amount in this field is required than is the case in most institutions, fourteen semester hours of credit, or nearly a half-year's work in all. Other courses in the same department have a definite bearing upon the religious thinking of the students. Much of this work is under the personal direction of President Slocum, and through it he has been able to exert a large influence upon student thought and character.

The college in its early years required as a part of its curriculum a certain amount of Bible-study. But for many years now it has been its policy to make such work elective in the belief that thereby better results could be attained. The courses have been broad and modern, yet constructive, and have helped the students to

retain and strengthen their hold on the realities of Christian faith.

The religious life of the college expresses itself in worship through the chapel exercises, conducted every morning except Saturday and Sunday, and through the Sunday afternoon vesper service, established during the present year. Attendance upon the former is required—a custom which the students would refuse to give up if it were left to them to decide, for “chapel” is a center of college unity as well as a devotional service. The vesper service is voluntary, but has on the whole been well attended. It is the wish of the college that the students as far as possible come into close relations with the city churches, but the college life is so much a unit in itself and so full of its activities that it has been increasingly difficult to link the young people to the city religious organizations. More and more stress is likely to be put upon the religious life within the institution as the college grows larger and more complex.

The student religious work is organized with the usual Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. The young men’s work is under the direction of a full-time paid secretary. It has been developed along the customary lines, with valuable extension work in the small communities lying about Colorado Springs. While this varied activity is exceedingly valuable, those most deeply interested in it feel that the college Y.M.C.A. has not yet satisfactorily met the religious situation among the men. It has not succeeded in influencing deeply the whole group. A broader work remains to be done which calls for the wisest leadership.

The young women have had during only one year, and that several years ago, a paid secretary. The college receives no young woman as a student from out of town except to its own dormitories, unless she enters the home of relatives or that of close and responsible friends. The life of the young women is therefore closely unified, and is so compact that it does not require the kind of leadership that the Y.M.C.A. must have. The Y.W.C.A. work has been quiet but effective, and a large number have gone out from it to fields of Christian service. It has more thoroughly and effectively leavened the life of the young women than the other association has succeeded in influencing the young men.

The test of the religious life of any college is at least in part the number of those who go out from it to take up religious work of various types in various fields. The record of Colorado College is comprehended, as far as figures can tell it, in the following statistics. Including the class of 1911, the total number of graduates living and dead, is 578, of whom 291 are men and 287 women. The large majority of these have been graduated in recent years, for during the first sixteen years of its history, the college graduated only six, and during the first twenty-one years only twenty-three. Of these 578 graduates:

	Total
18 are in the Christian ministry and 4 are studying for it	22
13 are general missionaries, or missionary teachers abroad and 2 at home	15
3 are medical missionaries, and 4 are studying for this work	7
3 are in Y.M.C.A. work abroad and 2 at home	5
7 are in Y.W.C.A. work at home and 1 abroad	8
2 are in settlement work	2
	59

Closely allied with work that is definitely religious is the profession of the teacher. A large proportion of those who are in this work enter it from the same motive that impels the minister or the missionary. This field of effort has proved especially attractive to the Colorado College graduate. A total of 188, 51 men and 137 women, are engaged in it, nearly one-third of the whole body of graduates. This number is nearly four times as many as have gone into business (48), or law (48), or engineering (49), and nearly ten times as many as have taken up the practice of medicine at home (19). The total of those who have gone into teaching and distinctively religious work is nearly 247, or nearly 43 per cent of the graduates of the college.

The fact that so many of the graduates of the college are grouped in these occupations which are recognized as opportunities for service is not accidental. From the beginning the note of service has always been sounded in the college life and in the lives and characters of those who have led in it. The college has given this definite inspiration to its students, and about nothing is it so thankful and proud as that so many of those who have gone out from it are doing their best to help in a world of human need.